

Women's and Gender studies is a course that I only heard about in the last few years but always felt like I needed. The topics of women's liberation movements, feminism, as well as the social construct of gender are topics that I have grown to find more and more interesting and have helped me learn more about myself. In my experience the field and concept of women and gender studies was looked down upon, which I feel was due to how misinterpreted it is, for a myriad of reasons. As presented in the first chapter of the course that was discussed from 'Threshold Concepts in Women's & Gender Studies', the purpose of women's and gender studies is to encourage new ways of understanding things like gender and feminism, subject that have only gotten more conflated and dumbed down as time has gone on. Along with bridging more of a gap between academic and real world areas, allowing students to learn new perspectives on aspects of life that they believe are native to them, reflect on what they have learned, and carry those understanding into the outside world. The aspect that I personally can say I appreciated and gained from this course was to exercise the skill of interpretation and critical thinking. Which is an avenue of academia that I was never able to utilize as much in a K-12 education.

The various theories of Women and Gender studies is also another topic of interest that I have come to love more and more. The social construct of gender is something that I have always found to resonate with me and wanted to know more about in order to articulate myself better when discussing it. The most interesting thing in learning about gender that I got from this course was the point of view that perception of gender influences sex. For years gender had always been a social construct and sex has always been a biological trait, however, I failed to assess how society's view of gender can dictate its view of sex as well, especially in common conversation they have become interchangeable with each other. A baby is due to be born female and parents gear up to paint their room pink, and buy them dolls. The two are seen as inseparable because in our current society they are inseparable which I feel should be changed and discussed with more nuance. On that same Intersectionality is a word I always had heard thrown around in leftist discussion on the internet, but never fully understood. Intersectionality is the idea that all forms of a person's identity have intersection, such as, race, class, gender, sexuality, age, and physical ability. This allows the discussion of how those categories affect the forms of the oppression and privilege an individual may experience. Intersectionality is essential to the field of Women's and Gender studies in order to explore how women do not face all the same forms of discrimination simply because they are all women. A prime example being the first wave of feminism simply only catering to white middle class women, which is why we ended up getting separate feminist movements for black, working class, and queer women later down the line. Rebecca Walker discusses in her talk about Third Wave Feminism how important it was for feminism to include more than just women, or it would most likely result in white women in positions of power then being able to oppress other groups below them. Along with that idea of all inclusive feminism comes the actual form of action from courses like Women's and Gender studies. This action can be described as 'Feminist Praxis'. Feminist praxis is defined as applying

knowledge to challenge oppressive systems and unbalanced practices. Praxis is all about the intersection of theory and practice, taking what you have learned and applying it into real world situations. I am glad that I for one have finally found a term that can define my own personal desire to take what is learned in a classroom setting into my everyday life, along with stepping outside of my comfort zone to take action against oppression.

Oppression is inherently a practice due the norms of our society and is inherently gendered due to who holds power in society, with the people who hold most positions of power being men. Oppression is gendered just like it is inherently racialized. An example of oppression being gendered can be best explored through discussing reproductive rights. The right to not have children as well as the way that women raise their children being dictated by people other than the individual inherently proves the point that oppression is gendered. Along with the fact of withholding birth control and not giving enough sexual education to women, allows for the powers in place to dictate things like abortion more successfully due to a lack of knowledge on the subject. Loretta Ross of SisterSong discusses how withholding information is another form of oppression. Another way in which oppression can be gendered is in bringing up intersectionality, the point of it in Women's and Gender studies spaces is to discuss how women face different types of oppression. An example would be how a black woman is treated in comparison to a white woman or a black man. The discrimination of being a black woman is racialized and heavily gendered, making a worse outcome as result of that fact.

It is impossible to deny the impact of women's activism in the world. Although it is heavily understated at how this has affected all people from all walks of life. It is easy to chalk up women's movements to have been beneficial to women, especially in the eyes of men. Women's activism has opened up the paths of discussion of the right of choice, consent, and social norms within our modern day society and people only seem to be getting more vocal and accustomed to these topics as time goes forward. One of the aspects I found most interesting in this course was women's activism effects on sex positive teachings and liberation. The film 'She's Beautiful When She's Angry' discusses how women's experiences in feminist spaces learning more about their anatomy caused women to go out and have more and better sex as a result of that understanding of their anatomy, along with not being shameful about their desire. The other of that being the #metoo movement, which is a direct result of previous and feminist movements with its cause even opening up the door for men to speak up on behalf of their own sexual harassment experiences. This resulted in an eye opening look at the abuse of power that occurs in the workplace, in a way that was never seen before and I can still feel the effects this had to this day.